

A VISION FOR THE ALTON DAY OF RENEWAL

The Alton Day of Renewal is called to be a place where the heart of the gospel message is proclaimed in all its fullness and power, where the depth of the Father's love is revealed, where those who come burdened and oppressed find in Christ God's healing and forgiveness, where those who come in weariness and frustration receive refreshment and strength, where those who need to be challenged to use their gifts and talents in the service of God's Kingdom are penetrated and moved by his word, where those who come in darkness and confusion find the light and simplicity of Christ's presence, and where those who come to praise and worship God are led by his Spirit to pour out their love for him.

Amen.

"You do not need to justify yourself when you come into my presence, or to make excuses.

Even if they are valid,
I am not particularly interested.
I already know them
and anyway, I love you as you are:
and the greater your need,
the more I want you to be aware of my compassion.

It is not that I have greater compassion, but that I want you to be more able
to understand that compassion and to receive it.

I can only do things on an infinite scale.
The limitations are at your end."

"As the wind moves among my people so my Spirit will move among my people. As the wind causes branches and leaves to move at its bidding and at its touch, so my Spirit would have my people move in response to my bidding.

This people is a disobedient people, for they look to themselves instead of me. They want to be entertained, to be made to feel good and to rejoice in my presence. Yet the path of the true disciples is one that means self-denial, hardship and suffering.

It is not enough to allow the wind of my Spirit to move you and then to return to your former position and to your former state. I am calling my people to allow my Spirit to move them from where they are and to be whisked along, caught up in the current of my Spirit.

My people need to repent of their soft, cushy ways, for I need disciplined, trained and determined soldiers in the fight that lies ahead.

Enlist, therefore, those who are prepared to serve as my soldiers and those who want to be put to the test. Then allow me to sift out those whose hearts are right with me -just as Gideon sifted out from his army those whom I had chosen to fight with him.

I like my force to be small and disciplined, for then they know that every defeat suffered by the enemy is a work of my Spirit, rather than of their own strength. I want them to be a trained army -trained by my spirit; then they will glorify my name.

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"I have called you to be saints and you will only have life and peace if you are concerned for spiritual things".

EZEKIEL, Chapter 33, verses 30-33.(NRSV)

³⁰ As for you, mortal, your people who talk together about you by the walls, and at the doors of the houses, say to one another, each to a neighbor, "Come and hear what the word is that comes from the LORD." ³¹ They come to you as people come, and they sit before you as my people, and they hear your words, but they will not obey them. For flattery is on their lips, but their heart is set on their gain. ³² To them you are like a singer of love songs, one who has a beautiful voice and plays well on an instrument; they hear what you say, but they will not do it.
³³ When this comes—and come it will!—then they shall know that a prophet has been among them.

AMOS, Chapter 3, verses 3-8. (NRSV)

³ Do two walk together unless they have made an appointment?
⁴ Does a lion roar in the forest, when it has no prey?
Does a young lion cry out from its den, if it has caught nothing?
⁵ Does a bird fall into a snare on the earth, when there is no trap for it?
Does a snare spring up from the ground, when it has taken nothing?
⁶ Is a trumpet blown in a city, and the people are not afraid?
Does disaster befall a city, unless the LORD has done it?
⁷ Surely the Lord GOD does nothing, without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets.
⁸ The lion has roared; who will not fear?
The Lord God has spoken; who can but prophesy?

JEREMIAH, Chapter 1 Verses 3-8 (NRSV)

³ It came also in the days of King Jehoiakim son of Josiah of Judah, and until the end of the eleventh year of King Zedekiah son of Josiah of Judah, until the captivity of Jerusalem in the fifth month.

- ⁴ Now the word of the LORD came to me saying,
- ⁵ "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations."
- ⁶ Then I said, "Ah, Lord GOD! Truly I do not know how to speak, for I am only a boy."
- ⁷ But the Lord said to me, "Do not say, 'I am only a boy'; or you shall go to all to whom I send you, and you shall speak whatever I command you.
- ⁸ Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, says the LORD"

THE RING ON CHRIST'S FINGER.

"My dear children, listen and do not despair. I am the Master Craftsman and I wish to form my beloved people into a thing of beauty, a ring, a symbol of my love for the world to see. This is my love gift to you and your offering to me. It will be as a ring exchanged at a marriage feast and I, the Bridegroom, will delight to wear it.

Yes, my people, I am the Craftsman and I leave nothing to chance. You, my children, are my precious stones and I have chosen you to adorn my ring. The design is mine and I will fashion you according to the desires of my heart. Do not be afraid, my precious ones, to submit to me, for you will be set in my love.

I will wear my ring and I will be its centre. Each jewel must serve its neighbour, linked together in love, service and recognition of the beauty of each other and the radiance of the whole. Together you will shine as fire -- a witness ring in the darkness".

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*"This is the law of your lives
just as it was the law of my life,
and you will only find life
if you seek to follow the way
that I have shown you.*

*I am the only Way,
the ONE Way,
to my Father's house,
although within his house
there is great variety
to enable many different peoples
to praise him in their own way.*

*He did not make you all the same,
so that the great carpet of creation
would be beautifully patterned
and not just one colour.*

*All are needed
if that pattern is to shine out
in its full richness.*

*Your Father has given each one of you
a place from which to shine
and resources to make your shining possible.
Do not deny the means of shining
to any other people or nation.
The earth is not yours
and its resources are to be shared out among you
as you need them.*

*Those who do not shine out
in full brightness
when the carpet is hung
on the walls of the Hall
where the wedding feast is held
on the last day
may be a sign of your sins
and not of their own failure.
I will judge fairly
and those who have sinned against my justice
will be condemned".*

HABBAKUK, Chapter 2.